

Art Audience as Shamanic Community:  
How Art Meets Psychological, Social, and Spiritual Needs

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## **Abstract**

Within the field of psychology, the majority of research on artistic creativity focuses on the originating creator, i.e. the artist, while neglecting the art audience. A brief literature review considers the trajectory of thought that led to such neglect. Utilizing the definition of shaman constructed by Ruth Inge-Heinze (1997), a preliminary definition of the art audience as shamanic community is constructed. The study demonstrates how art can provide for the audience's psychological, social, and spiritual needs; thus, illustrating the defining constructs of the art audience as shamanic community. The formation of a new subfield in creative studies, the psychology of the art audience, is recommended with specific recommendations for future studies.

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## **Art Audience as Shamanic Community:**

### **How Art Meets Psychological, Social, and Spiritual Needs**

When Dr. Ruth Inge Heinze taught her last Saybrook seminar on shamanism, I was among her fortunate students. As Dr. Heinze conveyed knowledge through lectures and visions induced by her powerful drumming, I recognized many similarities between shamans and artists. Later, using Dr. Heinze's definition of a shaman, I began demonstrating how artists might qualify as shamans (Benyshek, 2009).

The literature review considered research, from psychology, anthropology, sociology, creative studies, art history, and religious studies, towards constructing an interdisciplinary and multicultural model of the artist as shaman. The discussion was grounded in over three decades of personal experience as a professional artist, which provided autobiographical evidence of shamanic experiences during artistic creativity. However, the discussion neglected an important entity that is required for a shaman's work.

Dr. Heinze (1997) defined the shaman by performance of community service in response to psychological, social, or spiritual needs, through mediation between different states of consciousness, and the creation of connection to "higher powers" which is communicated via understood form.

Within this definition, the important role of shamanic community is emphasized. The shaman cannot perform community service without a community. Therefore, to broaden our understanding of the artist as shaman, we must also consider shamanic community. The definition of a shaman (Heinze, 1997) also contains a partial definition of shamanic community.

## **Shamanic Community: Definitions and Delimitations**

A shamanic community has psychological, social, or spiritual needs. The members share an understood form of communication and provide a role for the shaman. They depend on the shaman's skills in mediating between different states of consciousness. The community requires assistance with accessing "higher powers".

This preliminary definition provides the basic structure for the essay, which considers how an audience's psychological, social, or spiritual needs can be met by art. While shamanic communities are more complex than described herein, the definition delimits the number of variables to be considered.

All endeavors considered Euro-American fine arts are intended whenever "art" or "artist" is mentioned, including literature, performing arts, graphic arts, and plastic arts. The definition is historical (Martindale, 1999, p. 115), created within Western traditions of what fine art is, i.e. "modes of expression that use skill or imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2009.). I recognize the potential shamanic power of material culture such as folk art, decorative arts, crafts, ritual, and ceremonial objects. However, consideration of the shamanic effect of these art forms is beyond the present study which focuses upon contemporary Euro-American society. The exploration can be placed within the relatively young, evolving tradition of what is called "neo-shamanism", "urban shamanism", or understood as the general movement to revitalize shamanism (Atkinson, 1992).

Further, this essay presents an argument in favor of creating a subfield, within creative studies, devoted to the psychology of the art audience.

## **The Need for Art Audience Psychology**

Within the field of psychology, the majority of research on the art process tends to focus on the originating creator, i.e. the artist. There are numerous psychological studies of artists, for example: poet Anne Sexton (Middlebrook, 1992), choreographer Martha Graham (Lee, 1998), writer Anais Nin (Spencer, 1990), and painters Frida Kahlo (Goldsmith, 2004), Salvador Dali (Hartman, 2008), Artemisia Gentileschi (Mohacsy, 2004), Alberto Giacometti (Wilson, 2008), Pablo Picasso (Arnheim, 2006), and Vincent van Gogh (Harris, 2008). These studies are only a few, of many, that conducted research on individual artists.

In contrast, I do not know of a single psychological study of an individual member of the art audience. Entries in the *Encyclopedia of Creativity* (Runco & Pritzker, 1999) illustrate the present breadth of knowledge in creative studies as well as once again revealing a general lack of attention to the art audience. There are no entries devoted exclusively to a broad overview of art audience experience. In “Dance and Creativity,” Alter (1999) presented data about the creative processes of choreographers and dancers, including familial background, folk origins, innovation, and historical contexts. For Alter, participants in dance are limited to either those who dance or those who create dances. While Alter acknowledges that dances may be created for entertainment, ritual, or social purposes, she adheres to dance critic John Martin’s classification of the elements of dance, provided here with Alter’s interpretation: “the instrument (training the body), the form (composing the dance), and the medium (performing it for an audience)” (1999, p. 471). Alter also noted the contribution of Pauline Koner to the craft of performance, from the dynamics of excelling at dance to “secondary elements” involving stagecraft, “from the moment the dance begins until the curtain closes at the end” (p. 476). What happens before – and after – the curtain closes, within the audience is not addressed.

Why do researchers often isolate artists on islands, far from the audience? Let's briefly consider a few points on the map that led to this place.

### **A Historical Consideration of Art vs. Audience Studies**

The classical Greek philosopher, Aristotle (2009/350 BCE), in *Poetics*, analyzed the development, function, and structure of poetry. Although individual poets, such as Homer, are mentioned, they are not the primary subject. At this time, Greek society believed that artists received divine inspiration with the gods being the original source of creativity. The audience's emotional response to poetry, whether fear, pity, or pleasure, is a side note. Aristotle does not consider the development, function, and structure of the audience's response.

During the Renaissance, Giorgio Vasari (1912/1550) wrote 10 volumes of history and biographical accounts regarding eminent artists. Vasari's intended readers were "practicing artists" as well as "all those who follow and delight in the arts". Beyond this sentiment, audience is scarcely mentioned except for those in power who commissioned art. The budding humanist interest in individuals was limited to those deemed great and worthy of emulation.

Romantic poets, such as John Keats and William Wordsworth, were concerned about "the fractured, problematic relationship" (Bennett, 1994, p. 8) between their poetry and their audience. More recent investigations looked at the intent of these poets to influence their audience and the poets' desire for their work to live on, through infinite reception, into the future. But, as Bennett remarked, "In these studies critics have been more interested in the notion of the poet's engagement with his or her audience than with the responses of those audiences *per se*" (p. 8).

In the Victorian era, Thomas Carlyle (1968/1841) originated and developed the idea of "hero worship." Elements of hero worship might partly explain psychology's inattentiveness to

the art audience. Carlyle's ideas led him to renounce democracy (Fletcher, 1918) and support the institution of slavery (Carlyle, 1850). His ideas about the superiority of heroes, and his fascination with charismatic leaders, contributed to the rise of fascism (Bentley, 1944). Of course, I am not accusing psychology or creative studies of supporting slavery or fascism. However, it may prove worthwhile to become mindful of the hierarchies and prejudices established over centuries with regards to artists and, by default, to their audiences.

More recently, Richards (1996) considered how society is invested in perpetuating the myth of the lone genius through "positive and negative attributions" (p. 46). Socially unacceptable qualities, such as "oddity, eccentricity, and frank psychopathology" (p. 47), or "wildness" (p. 49), are projected onto the creative genius. Richards wrote, "it may seem to serve us well as a rational culture to have exceptional creators who accept the weight of uttering outrageous statements drawn from our individual and collective unconscious. We can resonate fully with the messages, yet we do not have to take responsibility for proposing them" (pp. 49-50).

The net effect of such projection is to restrict "us all in who we feel we can be and what we think we can accomplish. It channels our behavior into narrow ranges of social acceptability" (Richards, 1996, p. 50). At the same time, the creative genius might "represent emergent distillations, or edge-of-chaos condensations, of unusual talents and motivations" (p. 52) – which again recognizes the unique qualities of genius *that is dependent upon the societal and historical context largely created by individuals, most of them members of the art audience.*

## A Paradigm Shift Creates a Research Opportunity

For a moment, like two artists, let's direct our gaze at the less extreme outcomes of hero worship and, then, draw a thick, bold outline around that area wherein most research on the creativity of art occurs.

There is a huge amount of unexplored territory outside of the present boundaries of research where only a few have ventured. Look at the outline. See how that line also defines a kind of negative space? Therein resides the relatively unknown art audience who is not receiving the light of our attention.

From deep within that place, I hear Aaron Copland's 1944 composition for brass and percussion, *Fanfare for the Common Man*<sup>1</sup>. Listening, I sense an extraordinary sweep of space out to distant horizons. There stands a solitary figure, straight and strong with quiet pride. Insights rise with the ascending notes of the trumpets and horns, bringing memories of unflinching courage before sharp fangs of distress. As dawn's light glows more brightly, in the music and within myself, I recognize that I am the solitary figure. I withstood significant hardship and was not cowed. My common life is honored in the music through Copland's gift. Even though I am not the great Ulysses, I navigated past my own Scylla and Charybdis. In a mere three minutes, Copland's fanfare served as the catalyst to rewrite the narrative of me. I feel valued, worthwhile, and even heroic, with an elevated sense of well-being.

I recall Walt Whitman's (1940/1855) eulogy, "I Sing the Body Electric," loving and honoring the commoner, every housekeeper, laborer, and immigrant, even the slave standing at

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<sup>1</sup> An excellent recording of Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* may be heard online the *Performing Arts Encyclopedia* at the Library of Congress, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ahas/loc.natlib.ahas.100010429/default.html>, performed by the U.S. Marine Corps Band.

auction. Whitman recognized the greatness within each individual. Within the scope of one poem, Whitman leveled the hierarchy of superior and inferior persons constructed by Carlyle.

Whitman sent his book of poems, *Leaves of Grass* (1840/1855), to Ralph Waldo Emerson. Responding by letter, Emerson shared how the poems gave him delight, inspiration, strength, and encouragement (1855). In his brief missive, Emerson added a stone to the bridge between artist and audience.

Previously, in Emerson's (2004/1850) lecture series, the transcendental philosopher noted that famous individuals provided an "essence we were looking for...an exhibition, in some quarter, of new possibilities." He observed how the power and spirit of greatness is diffused:

By night and by day, in concentric circles from its origin<sup>2</sup>, and publishes itself by unknown methods: the union of all minds appears intimate: what gets admission to one, cannot be kept out of any other: the smallest acquisition of truth or of energy, in any quarter, is so much good to the commonwealth of souls.

In 1934, philosopher John Dewey (1958) asserted that an artwork was not finished until a viewer experienced the work of art. He believed that an audience member felt "what the work expresses is as if it were something one had oneself been longing to express" (p. 109). Dewey recognized the dynamic relationship that occurs between art and audience. He began shifting interest to the art audience, acknowledging how art served as a spokesperson for the viewer's or listener's self. Art can only provide this service by speaking a language understood by the audience. Thus, the artist-art-audience relationship qualifies as an understood form of communication, one of the defining qualities of shaman and shamanic community.

At this point in our journey through history, where are we standing on the map of great creators, on that collaborative enterprise drawn over centuries? Dewey has led us to that bold line of demarcation splitting artist from audience. If we step onto this line, where are we?

I hear Joni Mitchell (1975) singing:

Out on some borderline,  
Some mark of in between.  
I lay down golden in time  
And woke up vanishing.

Let's pause on this borderline, and heighten our awareness of place, no longer looking back in time, simply being here. What do we discover? Ink on a distorted map of the known world? But, as anthropologist Gregory Bateson cautioned, "The map is not the territory..." (1979, p. 30).

A drawing teacher might tell you that lines do not exist in nature, that when we draw a line, we are making an artificial distinction between this and that. Attend to the bold line drawn earlier. Under our extended and focused gaze, what happens? Do we wake up from a cultural trance that limited how far researchers might travel? Can we escape from the dogmatic dictatorship controlling the direction of our attention? As we awake, "golden in time," can we see what is vanishing? The borderline between art and audience? Where the line might not be a zone of separation; but, instead, a vast, energized, field where art and audience meet and relate?

Bateson's (1979) philosophy of mind looked at participation and relationships, perceiving "mental process" as "a sequence of interactions between parts" (p. 99). At this point in our travels, we are leaving behind dualistic thinking. Instead, we can follow the arrow on Bateson's signpost. He points out, "...if you want to understand human behavior, you are always dealing with total circuits, completed circuits" (1972, pp. 458-459). But, as von Bertalanffy (1968a, 1968b) notes, circuits within systems are not closed. In the dynamic system including art and audience, there is an ongoing flow of information in and out.

Richards (1996) saw how creators work within an interconnected, open system where relationships, zeitgeist, accessible information, and creative audiences make, in grand

collaboration, an endless stream of creative products and processes. The interrelationships, dialogues, dynamics, and infinite possibilities of influence, might best be understood via chaos theory. The functioning of somewhat complicated systems (SCS) reels beyond narrative and careens past dramatic plot to:

Interesting, quirky, even maddening trajectories far from simple and uplifting stories of progress, triumph, or even homeostasis. Everyday paths are complex and unpredictable. SCS represents a type of small nonlinear dynamical system, and they too can produce behavior characterized by technically defined chaos. . . . In contrast to nontechnical definitions involving extreme and even frightening disorder, chaos, in a mathematical sense, refers to a behavior of a system that is bounded yet never repeating, deterministic yet unpredictable (Schuldberg, 2007, p. 58).

Claims - that an experience tidily ends in closure or results in ever changing, never ending chaos - might appear to be irreconcilable opposites. Perhaps the point at which one “stops” and articulates experience creates meaning and results in closure. For example, after taking my 11 year old son and his best friend to see the latest Transformer movie, *Revenge of the Fallen*, we discussed: how the movie represented the confused melee of battle; why the particular lead actor was cast and how his “everyman” appearance made it easier for the audience to project themselves into the story; the utter sensory assault of the style that exploded the capacity to comprehend action, subjecting the viewer to shock after shock; that it was not giant robots who achieved the greatest accomplishments but motivated, dedicated humans; and, surprisingly, how we exited feeling greatly empowered, capable, even exalted.

The conversation gave a certain degree of fixed form, a kind of gestalt and closure, to the experience. The warm comradeship, the sunny day, the enthusiastic discussion, the pleasant walk to the car, summer vacation from school - all became part of our art experience.

For several days, I occasionally viewed excerpts of the movie in the theatre of memory. Then, a friend posted a website link, within an online social network, to an insightful review of

the movie (Anders, 2009). I read the review and then responded to the post. A dialogue ensued. The door of closure re-opened. While not qualifying as great filmmaking, by conventional standards, the “summer flick” is compelling. The friend will see the movie this weekend. No doubt, the dialogue will then continue.

The friend’s contribution will shift the conversation and alter the understanding of the movie while, simultaneously, increasing and deepening our understanding of each other, thus strengthening community ties. Seen over two weeks ago, the movie continues to operate as a strange attractor, sustaining disequilibrium, and developing meaning and relationships that could not have been predicted earlier.

Within Chinese culture, art experience is conceived as the art of savoring, not the perceptive series described by Pepper (1949) or “disjunctive acts of reflection on the meaning of a text, but rather of the ‘continuation’ of the text in the mind after reading is over, a time in which the significance of the text gradually unfolds” (Owen, 1992, pp. 593-594).

The difference between individuals who achieve closure and homeostasis during, or soon after, an art experience, and individuals who sustain an ongoing, chaotic state of nonlinear emergence, may be due to variables related to creativity. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Dacey and Lennon (1998) identified personality traits strongly correlated with creativity. Possibly related to the ability of the audience to create a deeply meaningful art experience, the traits include tolerance of ambiguity, stimulus freedom, flexibility, risk taking, preference for disorder, delay of gratification, freedom from sex-role stereotyping, openness, less defensiveness, high intelligence, playfulness, originality, adaptability, sensitivity, curiosity, ownership of cultural capital, complexity, and capable of analytical, intuitive, divergent, and convergent thinking.

## Research on the Art Audience

When we begin looking at the relational dynamic between artist and audience, we are moving from exclusive analysis of an eminent artist to a broader, “democratized” systems view of creativity (Richards, 2009, personal communication). Richards (1997) developed the subfield of “everyday creativity” which includes leisure activities:

Characterized by originality (involving new or unusual aspects) and meaningfulness to others....The term may also pertain to the creative process which underlies this. Indeed, everyday creativity, viewed as a survival capacity, or motive for ongoing growth and development, should be applicable to virtually any domain of human endeavor (p. 683).

Leisure activities include attending cultural events such as concerts or films, visiting art galleries, or reading poetry, with the audience experience qualifying as creativity.

Richards (2007) expanded her work on everyday creativity. She offered several insights into the art/audience relationship. In response to artwork, the audience might receive insight as things are pulled together “in ways that bring new pleasure or relief.” Richards recognized how “Creative appreciation is often not included along with visibly active creating. Yet it does take creative processing to dialogue with the innovation....Each person’s “conversation” is different, a unique encounter” (p. 44). Like eminent artists, the most gifted audience members, those “responsive others,” comprise a “limited elite” (p. 45). The fate of an eminent creator’s “innovation depends on the audience, on us, especially the more creative forefront of this audience....” (p. 44). Richards continued, art cannot succeed without “a larger context which is cocreated with a creatively minded public” (p. 45).

In the theatre of psychology, only a few researchers have joined Richards in turning away from the actors and stage to look, instead, at the audience. Pritzker (2007) found that when people view high quality television shows, “apparently passive viewers may at times be actively

creating, especially when engrossed in a program that offers sufficient cognitive stimulation” (p. 109). Creative flow, psychotherapeutic benefits, educational value, and positive influence on society may result. Yet, how these end results are achieved is not explored or explained.

Zausner (2007) described aspects of the audience process:

Every time we look at a work of art, we become cocreators with the artist because it is our response to art that brings it to completion. Art is made to be seen....Each viewing provides us with an opportunity to be creative....whenever we see a work of art, we activate our everyday creativity through the myriad personal associations that comprise our response to a visual stimulus at that specific moment. These associations come from our great interior resource, the combined potential of our conscious and unconscious mind” (p. 82).

Note how Zausner (2007), like Richards (2007), refers to the audience as cocreators.

Richards, Pritzker (2007), and Zausner understand that a kind of collaborative work is performed between audiences and artists. Zausner also recognized the power of art to alter the life of the viewer, through a unique internal dialogue, partly in response to depicted symbols and archetypes that may have been “part of shamanic rituals” (p. 84). Art may also provoke spiritual experiences by providing access to a “greater whole” (Zausner, p. 86).

Pritzker (2007) and Zausner (2007) reported positive outcomes that may be achieved through art experience. Many, if not most, of these results indicate the presence of shamanistic elements in art audience processes; e.g., how art may provide for communal, psychological, societal, or spiritual needs.

Both Zausner (2007) and Pritzker (2007) shared stories about art’s effect on their personal lives. When studying artists, psychologists may contribute to the understanding of audience experience by sharing subjective material. Researcher transparency humanizes the report, synthesizes subjectivity and objectivity, and forms a more intimate connection between the audience of readers and the researcher-writer.

In 1934, Dewey (2005) stated “works of art are the only media of complete and unhindered communication...that can occur in a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience” (p. 109). In other words, expressive communication through art can create community – and the creation of community is, in of itself, a means of healing society.

### **Community**

The English word “community” originated in the Latin *munus* which indicates “service or duty, gift, and sacrifice” (McGinnis, House, and Jordan, 1999, p. 213). Thus, community is a metaphor:

At its root is the idea of an exchange of services – out of duty, it may be, but also pointing to another dimension of the idea, freely, even affectionately, as a gift, or even a sacrifice. A community, then, is the assemblage of individuals to whom one is bound by this kind of relationship – one defined, we might even say constituted, by mutual obligation and by an exchange of gifts (McGinnis, House, & Jordan, p. 213).

Within the field of anthropology, community is seen as an “infinite web of connection” (Amit & Rapport, 2002, p. 17), rich with thick meanings, emotionally potent, comforting as a haven, with solutions to problems (Gold, 2005), and based on the subjective sense of belonging which “combines both affective and cognitive components, both a feeling of solidarity and an understanding of shared identity” (Brow, 1990, p. 1).

Although community “is often invoked as a unity, as an undifferentiated thing with intrinsic powers, that speaks with a single voice....Communities are of course nothing of the sort” (Watts, 2000, p. 37), not univocal (Gold, 2005), nor heterogeneous (Agrawal, 1999). Not only does the concept community paradoxically contain unity and difference, it also may be marked by negative valence. For Durkheim (1964), community meant rural life, a lack of social change, a limited world view, imprisonment in the shackles of tradition, and a lack of freedom.

In contrast, as noted by Gold (2005), “scholars with less sanguine views about the benefits of progress did not abandon community altogether” (p. 8). A loss of community can lead to “alienation, meaninglessness, and an amoral condition” (Gold, p. 9). For Nisbet (1953), the absence of community, resulting from “triumph over tribal laws or communal laws of conformity” (p. 11), uprooted individuals who lack status, are desperate for meaning, and long for fellowship and morality. Perhaps, through art, a gift of meaning can be received that provides for psychological needs.

### **Psychological Needs**

Heinze (1991) mentioned how shamanic rituals could provide cathartic release. In *Politics*, Aristotle (2009/350 BCE) discussed emotional catharsis, or purging, provoked by art:

But we maintain further that music should be studied, not for the sake of one, but of many benefits, that is to say, with a view to education, purgation... for enjoyment, for relaxation, and for recreation after exertion. It is clear, therefore, that all the modes must be employed by us.... For feelings such as pity and fear, or, again, enthusiasm, exist very strongly in some souls, and have more or less influence over all. Some persons fall into a religious frenzy, whom we see as a result of the sacred melodies – when they have used the melodies that excite the soul to mystic frenzy – restored as though they had found healing and purgation. Those who are influenced by pity or fear, and every emotional nature, must have a like experience, and others in so far as each is susceptible to such emotions, and all are in a manner purged and their souls lightened and delighted.

Expanding on Aristotle’s ideas, Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1925) wrote “Catharsis of the aesthetic response is the transformation of affects, the explosive response which culminates in the discharge of emotions” and “art therefore becomes a most powerful means for important and appropriate discharges of nervous energy.”

### **George Longfish and Molly McGlennan**

The dynamic of catharsis may, in part, explain the exultation expressed by Molly McGlennan (2004) in response to the artwork of George Longfish. The Native American artist

created *Winter Still Life Landscape, South Dakota, 1983* in remembrance of the battle of Wounded Knee.

“Old men, women, and children,” written twice, becomes the foreground of a textual landscape. The frozen body of Chief Big Foot is juxtaposed with the frozen confection of Eskimo pies. Nearby, the words, “My Lai,” refer to the killing of innocents by American soldiers in Viet Nam, broadening the historical context and creating a continuum of time reaching from past to present.

Ojibwa writer and art historian, Molly McGlennan (2004), found spirit “within the remembering of a horrific massacre.... Longfish’s art draws on a sense of honor that allows truth to be pulled from all directions and the spirit to emerge from within the work in a way that heals the very wound it addresses.”

One source of information available to researchers, regarding audience response, exists in the form of art reviews. For the art-audience system, reviewers can serve as gatekeepers selecting which art work receives more attention and high regard. For the audience, a reviewer can provide a unique interpretation, demonstrating how to enter an art experience. The reviewer can serve as a role model, creating additional layers of artistic communication, through personal transparency and historical contexts, with which the reader may dialogue. The reviewer may guide the reader deeper into an art work, offering insights, and then concluding with integration.

My relationships with Longfish’s *Winter Still Life* and McGlennan’s review developed in tandem.

What is this relationship?

Longfish offered an alternate view to the frontier hero exploring unknown wilderness. He criticizes commercial interests that appropriate Native American names to lend romantic

glamour to cars, sports teams, and steak restaurants. Instead, Longfish revealed what is hidden in the long, dark shadow cast by manifest destiny.

As a viewer, I wondered: Why should we gaze at the image of a frozen chief? Why is it important to know our nation's history? How does this artwork provide for psychological, social, and spiritual needs?

Longfish reveals the ugly truth beneath President Andrew Jackson's (1829) letter to the Creek tribe:

Your Father [the president's patriarchal reference to himself] has provided a country large enough for all of you, and he advises you to remove to it. There your white brothers will not trouble you; they will have no claim to the land, and you can live upon it, you and all your children, as long as the grass grows or the water runs, in peace and plenty. It will be yours forever (p. 452).

One year later, President Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act which forced 70,000 children, women, and men from their homes and resulted in up to 30,000 deaths (Wong, 2007).

Two or three years ago, I first saw *Winter Still Life Landscape, South Dakota, 1983*. I was looking for art by a minority artist, created from an ethnic perspective, to start providing a bit of balance to the mass of psychological studies about Caucasian, Euro-American artists. At that time, I did not connect with the work emotionally; I saw found, disparate images juxtaposed in ironic comment upon the present. I recognized the referenced tragedy in the collage language of post-modernism; but, I did not experience the tragedy.

Within two dimensional, visual arts, several kinds of distance may be present, including illusory representation of space as well as the temporal distance that exists between an artwork's creation and perception by its audience. Bullough (1957) originated the theory of psychical distance. When psychical distance is created, distance is placed between the perceiver and "such objects as are the sources or vehicles of emotion" (p. 94). Works of art can be source objects.

Bullough (1957) observed that, in art experience, the audience often interprets “ ‘subjective’ emotions” as belonging to the art object. Psychological distance permits “an emotional reaction” to arise, possibly accompanied by revelation, then transformation. The degree of psychological distance varies according to the individual capacities of audience members and differences in art objects. During my initial analysis of *Winter Still Life*, what Bullough termed “over distancing” resulted in a lack of emotional, personal engagement with the work.

Despite my initial “cold” response to Longfish’s work, I looked again and again. I read McGlennan’s (2004) essay for the fourth time.

I am writing outdoors, on a glorious day in spring, near a waterfall that sings near the front door of my mountain home. I hear frogs serenading their sweethearts and the unrelenting rush of vehicles hurling down the freeway that bisects this mountain valley. Here, not that long ago, the Snoqualmie tribe hunted deer and elk and made their homes. Acre by acre, the valley was occupied by log cabins, dairy farms, cul de sac developments, gated communities, and private Shangri-La’s. Only recently has the tribe regained a foothold in the valley – through the construction of an enormous casino.

When I, a Caucasian woman, look at *Winter Still Life Landscape, South Dakota, 1983*, I do not find spirit. I do not feel healed. I feel racial shame. I know natives were deliberately infected with small pox, herded into forced marches, murdered ruthlessly, and given treaties to sign that would soon be broken.

The shame spreads through my body, drawing a pall over the day, bringing tears to my eyes. Yet, perhaps this is a healing, a making whole through knowledge and consciousness. As my fingers type, my hand reaches out to McGlennan and Longfish. My eyes meet their gaze.

I say, “I am sorry. I am so very, very sorry. I will do all that I can.”

My thoughts go back in time when I taught in remote, Native American villages in the Alaskan bush. I persuaded elders to fund art scholarships for the talented teens. Then, another memory rises. When I taught at a university in Alaska with a high population of Native students, I pressured the art program director to hire a Native art instructor. I was told “They’re all drunks.” Nonetheless, I was persistent. One year later, I saw the raven-black hair of Native students and teacher bent over baskets being skillfully woven with traditional methods. Finely constructed, the baskets can be used to transport water without a single drop leaking out.

I think of my service as an art grant juror. Two Caucasian jurists, armed with graduate art degrees, voted against an artist from Japan and an artist from Guatemala. Both artists, highly skilled in the traditional arts of their own cultures, were criticized for their lack of innovation, progress, and modernity. The jurists’ prejudice also privileged, to use a concept from post-modern criticism, fine arts over crafts and folk art.

Within the jury panel, I spoke up and addressed the value system used to disqualify the Japanese and Guatemalan artists. To their credit, the opposing jurists listened. Then they asked a Japanese juror, silent throughout the discussion, if they were being racist. The woman simply nodded “yes”. The ethnic artists received grants.

These memories are synthesized with Longfish’s images and McGlennan’s words. “Memories,” wrote Dewey (1958), “not necessarily conscious but retentions that have been organically incorporated in the very structure of the self, feed present observation. They are the nutriment that gives body to what is seen. As they are rewrought into the matter of the new experience, they give the newly created object expressiveness” (pp. 89-90).

The synthesis of memories is related to philosopher Stephen Pepper’s (1949) concepts of funding and fusion.

Funding... is based on the fact that it takes time to experience a work of art. During that time we have many separate successive perceptions of the work... [which] may be similar, they may have a family resemblance, but they are not identical. However, they interact with each other: early perceptions and strong perceptions dominate weak perceptions. As these perceptions accumulate in memory and in present experience, they modify and enrich each other (Feldman, 1992, p. 260).

The process of funding, through a “perceptive series” (Pepper, 1949, p. 149) enriches aesthetic experience and makes the activity personally meaningful. This experience is what creates, for the viewer, an “aesthetic object” (Jordan, 1937). The object becomes the “focus of appreciation and critical judgment” (Feldman, 1992, p. 260), set apart from the viewer by psychical distance.

“Closure,” noted Feldman (1992), is the “completion of the process of aesthetic perception” (p. 257). Good design leads to good gestalt; i.e., the artist structures an artwork so that closure is eventually attained. “That closure, in turn, yields coherence, meaning, and emotional satisfaction” (Feldman, p. 257).

Pepper refers to this state as fusion, a kind of holistic understanding and sense of closure, which integrates previous perceptions, emotions, memories, and thoughts. I think fusion can also occur in steps, in a series of loop de loops, with each subsequent fusion building upon the previous one as the viewer returns to the work of art again and again – and fusion might lead to action.

My encounter, with Longfish and McGlennan, strengthened my commitment to activism, to speak out and shine my little flashlight into darkness and ignorance.

Suddenly, at this stage in my internal process, I feel catharsis. The weight of shame and grief lightens. A small smile forms beneath my tears.

Several days later, I again view *Winter Still Life Landscape, South Dakota, 1983*. Within the picture plane, next to the frozen body of the Chief, the racial riots in my high school appear,

followed by a parade of memories, decades in length, populated by prejudices and persecutions, large and small, immediate and distant, personal and multinational, sobering and heavy, memory upon memory, wave upon wave, folding together, weighing heavily on my day. Molly McGlennan, where did you find spirit?

McGlennan (2004) wrote of healing received for past tragedies and present realities. In Longfish, McGlennan found honor and spirit. Her needs for psychological, social, and spiritual well-being were restored through a shamanic art experience.

I could never say that I “like” *Winter Still Life*, nor do I find it “beautiful” in the sense of feeling aesthetically pleased. Instead, Longfish and McGlennan heightened my consciousness of social inequalities and injustice while serving as a catalyst to action. Although we are looking at the same artwork, the gift received by McGlennan is different than the gift given to me. To a great extent, our responses are no doubt due to differences that may be identified through the same variables used to understand significant influences on eminent creators, including: genetics, neurological development, sociocultural environment, education, personality, work, and family (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Dacey & Lennon, 1998; Findlay & Lumsden, 1998).

*At the same time, Molly and I experience similar responses founded upon our commonalities. We are Americans, contemporaries, and women writing about art. Looking back in time, we gaze around our mutual present. We are sisters in grief and firebrands of determination. Together, we hold the torch high. The flames illuminate pages of books. The books illuminate the rapt faces of our readers. Our readers illuminate the world.*

Longfish, McGlennan, and I are separated by space and time. Yet, I suddenly recognize myself amidst the community peopled by Longfish’s viewers and in McGlennan’s readers. Three-dimensional space and linear time has, in this moment, collapsed and disappeared. Unity remains.

Unity and integration are essential components in my sense of health. What other artistic processes contribute to a sense of wholeness?

### **Soul Retrieval**

“We come to painting, to poetry, to the stage, hoping to revive the soul,” wrote Hyde (1983, p. 59). How does art revive soul and is this action related to shamanism?

Soul retrieval is one of the shaman’s tasks (Ingerman, 2006; Sidky, 2008); yet, there is no uniform, cross cultural understanding of what a soul is. Across cultures, folk taxonomies categorize souls differently. Each culture, of course, uses words from its own language for what, in English, is translated into “soul” – and translation often erases nuance of meaning and inevitably lacks cultural context.

While acknowledging the inevitably flawed and fragmentary meanings inherent in translation, it is important to recognize that the word “soul” and descriptions of “soul retrieval” occur repeatedly throughout research literature on shamanism. Thus, the word “soul” might have some common, general “folk” definition with a consistent core and outlying deviations.

*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2009) offered several definitions of soul involving emotional, spiritual, moral, essential, individual, universal, and immaterial characteristics.

Many shamanic societies believe in multiple souls (Sidky, 2008). According to Sumegi (2008), the Tibetans believe in protective spirits who inhabit the body, serve different roles, and are considered “internal aspects of a person’s life force or soul” (p. 16). Complex and interrelated, these souls are “perceived as substantial “beings” that possess agency to act in different ways and fulfill different functions” (Sumegi, p. 16). Souls are vulnerable, potentially lost during sleep, stolen by spirits, or damaged by trauma.

In ancient Greece, the concept of soul evolved continually (Lorenz, 2009). Soul was multipartite and responsible for all vital, animating functions, moral judgment, change, reasoning, desire, emotions, and interpretation of sense impressions. Over centuries, contradictions in definitions occur between different schools of philosophy. Soul was seen as finely corporeal or independently incorporeal, mortal or immortal, rational and nonrational (Lorenz, 2009). Despite conflicting definitions, there was a general agreement that, ideally, the soul should maintain balance and avoid extremes.

Van de Kemp (2000) wrote: “The idea of soul is among the most elusive, complicated concepts in western intellectual history....Soul dictates an anthropology that regards persons as embodied souls or ensouled bodies, and a psychology defined as the logos or speech of the *psuchē*” (pp. 334-335). She also notes that descriptions of soul sickness occur “throughout history and across cultures,” concluding with the assertion that “A soul-sensitive psychology can also heal such forms of soul pathology as the depersonalized, disembodied self...and folk illnesses of soul loss....” (p. 336).

Many cultures retain a sense of intact, healthy souls, which are capable of optimal functioning when the soul has not suffered from damage, fragmentation, loss, sickness, absence, curse, or theft. These soul injuries may be sufficiently severe as to qualify, in our culture’s diagnostic vocabulary, as trauma.

Writing about trauma, Hartman and Zimberoff (2006) also defined soul:

The more overwhelming the assault, the more essential and closer to the core is that aspect that must be sacrificed. Inner resources such as innocence, trust, spontaneity, courage, and self-esteem were lost, stolen, or abandoned in those early traumatic moments, leaving an immense empty space. The psychic energy cast off through dissociation and splitting, the sacrificed aspects of self, do not simply disappear into thin air, but rather continues in split off form as a primitively organized alternative self. Retrieving these inner resources in age regression to those traumatic events reunites the

sacrificial alternative self with the immanent embodied person, strengthening the fabric of the soul's energetic field.

What we are proposing here is a profound level of splitting in that what is split is neither consciousness nor ego nor self, but rather one's essential spiritual identity, what we are calling one's soul (p. 3).

Embodied trauma may manifest as amnesia, loss of consciousness, feeling disembodied, somatic symptoms, hyperarousal, and not feeling the body or emotions (Rothschild, 2000).

Austin (2002) asked:

How does one lose a self? It can be sacrificed at birth to fill up an empty parent. It can be shattered into fragments from unspeakable terrors like abuse, neglect and emotional and/or physical abandonment. It can become numb, deadened to life as the only way to exist in an unsafe environment. Or essential parts of the self can be hidden away because when they first came forth they were not welcomed, seen, understood and valued, but were judged, shamed and rejected for being too different, too needy, too much. Sometimes, the authentic self retreats into an inner sanctum because it was envied and even hated for the bright light of potentiality it possessed (p. 231).

Soul retrieval can be an effective treatment for traumatic disassociation. Soul loss injures a person's essence, manifesting as despair, loss of meaning and severed connection. Winkelman (2002) wrote, "Soul loss occurs from trauma that causes an aspect of one's self to dissociate, making reintegration of these disassociated aspects of self central to healing" (p. 9).

For the purposes of this essay, the concept "soul" will refer to an aspect of an individual, or society, which is essential for optimal functioning, health, and actualization. Fueled, in part, by spiritual energy that dwells with the self and the physical body, soul is also a force that exists outside the body, potentially connecting to and communicating with a greater spiritual entity or what is sometimes called universal mind.

Choreographer Martha Graham, in an interview about her dance, *Lamentation*, shared this story:

One of the first times I did it was in Brooklyn. A lady came back to me afterwards and looked at me. She was very white-faced and she'd obviously been crying. And she said "You'll never know what you have done for me tonight, thank you," and left. I asked

about her later. Seems she had seen her child, her 9 year old son, killed in front of her by a truck. They'd made every effort to make her cry and she was not able to cry. But, when she saw *Lamentation*, she said she felt that grief was honorable and that it was universal and that she need not be ashamed of crying for her son. I remember that part, that story is a very deep story in my life. It made me realize that there's always one person to whom you speak in the audience (Ardolino, 1976).

For Graham, the mother represented the individual in the audience who needs the artist's gift. What kind of gift it is received is, in part, dependent upon the recipient. There may be a kind of response that is generalized across the entire audience. Then, like fractals, elaborating in similar patterns along different trajectories, there is a unique experience within each individual. Perhaps art acts as what chaos theory refers to as a strange attractor.

Attractors in general are regions in a space defining a system's behavior where it tends to go and tends to stay. Strange attractors are bounded regions of the space where the system is never in exactly the same place and moving in the same direction twice, where behavior is contained but ever novel (Schuldberg, 2007, p. 58).

Whether viewing, listening, or reading, art can transport the audience to another realm where realities of deepest soul may be viewed. The view may also encompass collective images and archetypal patterns presented symbolically, providing access to an archaic unconscious realm that continually influences our daily lives (Jung, 1964). Describing the physiological effects of trauma, Swallow wrote, "Non-declarative or implicit memory may not be felt at conscious level, is not easily forgotten or erased and may be reactivated by an appropriate stimulus after many years" (2002, p. 48). Art offers an opportunity to re-experience trauma within a beautiful and bounded container. Austin noted that "parts of the self can also be projected onto the voice, the music and the musical instruments" (2002, p. 233); thus, providing a chance to dialogue with self. Potentially, this process offers an opportunity for the audience to achieve greater integration.

Thomas Moore (2000) commented, a portion of the suffering in depression comes from our inability to give it language and imagery. It feels vague and therefore without meaning” (p. 33). According to Marcel Detienne (1996), poets are masters of shamanic remembering bringing into consciousness hidden personal secrets for our personal benefit. The process of healing from trauma “involves reinhabiting the body.... the dissociative defences that initially protect the psyche from annihilation sever the connection between the body, mind and spirit. Embodiment requires the courage to remember and experience the sensations and feelings that were overwhelming” and “intolerable” because no one helped “make sense and digest the intense effects” (Austin, 2002, pp. 234-235). Art gives form, provides meaning, and transforms memory and emotion.

Can art experience enhance immune system functioning? After listening to uplifting dance music for only 50 minutes, levels of antibodies increased while levels of stress hormones decreased (Enk, Franzke, Offermanns, et al., 2008). Enk stated,

We'd expect that different kinds of music might show different physiological and immunological effects. Not only the music itself is important but probably the personal appraisal of the listener will also be important. We did not use relaxing music, but rather exciting music that were joyful dance tunes from different centuries (Gray, 2008).

Listening to music can improve the fluency and ease of movement in people with Parkinson disease (Sutton, 2002). There are specific opiate receptors in the brain which release endorphins when stimulated by music (Austin, 2002).

Martha Graham's *Lamentation* provided for the traumatized mother's psychological needs, offered an expressive role model in the understood language of dance, allowed her to see the beauty and nobility of grief in the dancer, allowed her to emotionally experience the death of her son, stimulated cathartic release, brought honor, and a personal connection to the

choreographer. In a way, *Lamentation* brought the mother back to life through a kind of soul retrieval.

Glenn (1996) studied the process of change following shamanic soul retrieval, “From a Western perspective, the theory of soul retrieval suggests that when fragmented, forgotten aspects of self, i.e., aspects of self previously split off or lost from consciousness, are recovered, there is an increase in vitality” (p. ....). Glenn found that soul retrieval resulted in increased self-esteem, intuition, emotion, extraversion, and ability to articulate experience.

According to Hyde (1983):

The spirit of an artist’s gifts can wake our own. The work appeals, as Joseph Conrad says, to a part of our being which is itself a gift and not an acquisition.... Our sense of harmony can hear the harmonies that Mozart heard. We may not have the power to profess our gifts as the artist does, and yet we come to recognize, and in a sense receive, the endowments of our being through the agency of his creation. We feel fortunate, even redeemed.... A gift revives the soul (p. xii.).

### **Social Needs**

Perhaps, gifts from shamans and artists may also revive society. Providing for social needs is one of the shaman’s responsibility (Heinze, 1997). Feldman (1992) commented “...all works perform a social function since they are created for an audience....Artworks may be created because of some personal need, but they still call for a social response” (p. 43). Clearly, artists can serve society and society can be served by art. How does this occur?

In 1817, poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge invented the phrase “suspension of disbelief” to indicate a state of “poetic faith” during which there is “a transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith” (p. 5).

The phrase, suspension of disbelief, is definition through negation. Expressed positively, reader and poem cocreate a state of belief. Ferri (2007) wrote:

Scholars presume that readers, viewers, or listeners of a creative work must engage in some unique leap into the work itself. The willing suspension of disbelief represents a process of senses (cognitions) and imagination (artistic) in which the reader, viewer, or listener cognitively engaged and experiences the creative work” (p. x).

The engagement occurs at a level of reality where literary events are experienced as if true. Imagery transports the reader into the narrative, resonating in a reader’s capacity for visualization, in which “mental images, enhanced by the artful application of just the right words, produce a more enduring transportation into a story” (Green & Block, 2000, p. 323).

### **Social Problem Genre of Literature**

The social problem genre of literature uses suspension of disbelief to build empathy towards healing the ills of society.

The novel, *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse*, by Anna Sewell (1907), displayed publicly the abuse of horses by rich and poor. The story is presented as first person narrative from the main character, the horse named Black Beauty. The author borrowed language from the context of slavery to strengthen her message. She invited readers to sympathetically share Black Beauty’s interior life and physical sensations (Hastings, 2004). These literary devices resulted in a more powerful public impact than achieved by contemporaneous tracts on animal rights (Hastings).

Sewell’s book led directly to the elimination of the bearing rein, a device that forced the head of a horse up to a “fashionable” level, caused immediate pain, and injured the horse’s neck. To date, across the planet, an estimated 50 million copies of *Black Beauty* have been sold (Hankins, 2005) and the message still resonates today. The editor of an online magazine, *West by Northwest*, recalled:

Everything I ever needed to know I first learned in *Black Beauty* as a child. Like many working in animal welfare, human welfare and labor rights, peace, green cities, and land use movements, this little book greatly influenced my life .... (Hudson, 2005).

Thus, the influence of *Black Beauty* travelled beyond the subject of animal abuse into other fields, and other times, benefitting animals, people, and planet.

### **Darkness into Light**

Feldman (1992) commented:

As a type of personal expression, art is not confined to self-revelation. It can also convey an artist's attitudes about *public* objects and events. Basic human emotions and situations like love, death, celebration, and illness constantly recur, and we see them in a fresh light because of the personal comment made by an artist (p. 12).

Artists often play the role of shadow bearers in our society. That which society represses, fears, forgets, or secretly desires – artists will express. Sometimes, artists go into the shadows and then construct a work of art that embodies the shadow material. When the artwork is brought out of the shadow, whether carried to a reading lamp or into the spotlight onstage, what was previously ignored must be attended to by the audience. Like traumatized individuals, traumatized societies also need shamanic healing. Bringing neglected knowledge into consciousness and triggering empathy, interwoven with memories of forgotten realities, are shamanic acts that can be performed by art in the service of societal needs.

Another novel in the social problem genre, that strongly influenced the course of history, was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, authored by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852/1900). In the preface to the 1900 edition, Walsh noted how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* “easily leads the great books in the world among volumes written for influence....” (p. iv). Prior to the book's publication, abolitionists were considered “social pariahs...fools and fanatics...hooted at, stoned, and otherwise persecuted by the mob” (Walsh, p. viii).

Prior to Stowe's novel, Christianity generally regarded slavery as:

A condition which God had sanctioned in the past and which He permitted in the present, that to murmur or complain, least of all to make any effort to curtail or suppress the evil,

was to rail again Providence, was to take the first step towards Bedlam, was to ostracize yourself from decent society (Walsh, p. ix).

Despite this social context, a vision appeared to Harriet Beecher Stowe during a church service. The entire scene of the book's conclusion was revealed during communion. "A power higher than herself seemed to have taken possession of her, to direct her, to inspire her" (Walsh, 1900, p. x).

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* caused an immediate sensation and was embraced eagerly by abolitionists. With sales of 300,000 in the first year, the book exerted an influence equaled by few other novels in history, helping to solidify both pro- and antislavery sentiment (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2009). Soon, theatres capitalized on the book's popularity with "literally hundreds of derivative melodramas, burlesques, parodies and 'Tom Shows' ..." (Kaufman, 2007, p. 20), some of which served to disseminate Stowe's message to an even broader audience.

The book, along with its author, was vehemently denounced in the South. There, reading or possessing the book became an extremely dangerous enterprise. In response, at least 25 proslavery novels were published prior to the Civil War (Library of Congress, 2007). Perhaps the strong, negative reaction is an example of what Bullough (1957) meant by concordance between a work of art and the spectator. If an artwork presents an unfavorable view of a character or situation, which is too similar to the audience, then the artwork is often rejected.

However, rejection is not the only response. There can be a scaffolding response that builds upon the previous work, continuing a dialogue with the topic, and furthering social transformation.

Frederick Douglass read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and then wrote *The Heroic Slave* (1975/1853) to contradict the stereotypes of African-Americans presented by Stowe. Douglass

succeeded in further raising social consciousness regarding slavery and brought the topic into political debates.

Kaufman (2007) described how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* contributed to social processes:

The cultural heat that was absorbed into the novel, and heightened and generated from it, blasted through the tinderbox of American sectionalism in which also swirled the sparks from other acts and events – the Fugitive Slave Law (1850), the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), the Dred Scott case (1856-57), the guerrilla wars of 'Bleeding Kansas' (1856), Harper's Ferry (1859) and the election of Lincoln (1861).

The emancipation of the slaves also resulted in former slaves learning to read. Their literacy provided access to the books that led to their freedom. After a long journey, guided by African American authors such as Ralph Ellison (*The Invisible Man*, 1952, winner of the 1953 National Book Award), Lorraine Hansberry (*Raisin in the Sun*, 1959, awarded 1959 New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play of the year), and Toni Morrison (nine novels including the 1988 Pulitzer Prize winning *Beloved*, 1987) - accompanied the entire distance by millions of readers – another book was published.

*Dreams from My Father* (Obama, 2004) became a number one on the *New York Times* Bestseller List. The book, and the collective power of its readers, influenced voters in the recent national election. For many readers in Obama's audience, the autobiography contributed shamanically towards healing the persistent social ill of racial prejudice.

As I write this essay, I am moving through the work of George Longfish, Molly McGlennan, Anna Sewall, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Douglass, and Barack Obama. Or, are these works of literature moving through me, as my racial shame is replaced by national pride?

Heinze (1982) noted that spontaneous, expressive, shamanic practitioners respond to community need:

What are these needs? The need for reassurance, the need for knowing, for retrieving information which has become inaccessible during the average waking state, and, most of all, the need to activate one's own self-healing powers, the need for transformation. (pp. 29-30).

Harriett Beecher Stowe and Frederick Douglass, and the audiences who received, emulated, and challenged them, performed much of the groundwork that prepared the cultural battlefield for the Civil War (Kaufman, 2007). The transformative, healing power of the novels contributed energy and momentum to a social trajectory of change that, 156 years after the emancipation of the slaves, elected our nation's first African-American president, Barack Obama.

### **Spiritual Needs**

Augustine described the state of his soul, prior to converting to Christianity, as "sickly and full of sores" (2002, 397-401 CE). He experienced his soul as "corrupted," "diseased," "far wandering," "seduced," "undone," "unhealthy," "wasted," and "wounded." Unfulfilled by a wanton, dissipated life, Augustine yearned for more, "O Truth, Truth, how inwardly did even then the marrow of my soul pant after Thee, when they often and diversely, and in many and huge books, echoed of Thee to me..."

Heinze (1991) noted how "Spiritual crises may indicate an onsetting process of restructuring an individual's life" (p. 207). Dabrowski (1976) theorized that an ongoing cycle of positive disintegration and integration is integral to individual development. Flach (1997) explored the disruptive-reintegrative nature of creativity, asserting that in "day to day living, problems crack the structures of life" (p. 182). Re-establishing health requires the "building of new, more suitable and more adaptive ones" (p. 182). Augustine fell into spiritual crises. What distinguishes this as positive disintegration, are the following qualities:

The individual has a high level of intelligence and creativity, the symptoms arise during periods of developmental crises or of extreme stress, both insight and capacity for emotional closeness are present, the whole person is involved rather than merely narrow symptoms which do not arouse the individual's concern, and there is a balance of retrospection and prospection (Aronson, 1964, pp. xiv-xv).

During Augustine's crises, literary forms, such as biographies preserved in precious codices, provided access to the Christian God. Achieving access to a higher power through literature fulfills one of the defining characteristics of shamanism set forth by Heinze (1997) and demonstrates another means by which art can function shamanically for a reader.

In the fourth century, CE, St. Anathasius wrote the *Life of St. Anthony* (1978/356-362 CE). Augustine read the *Life of St. Anthony*. Through the mediation of this biography, Augustine experienced God, which inspired him to convert to Catholicism in 386 CE (Mendelson, 2000). Augustine believed that the intercession of God restored his soul to health and that soul was the enlivening presence of God.

Augustine became an author in his own right. In his *Confessions* (397-401 CE), he created another literary means by which an audience could access higher powers. Eventually, he became canonized as St. Augustine of Hippo.

Just (2009) explained the Roman Catholic doctrine on divine revelation as the belief that "revelation is "transmitted" or "handed down" or "passed on" (Latin *traditio*) through the ages." Beyond the texts of the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*, divine revelation is recognized in "the ongoing teaching, interpretation, and application of God's revelation in the lives of individuals and communities throughout the centuries" (Just). From St. Anthony through St. Anathasius, and then onto St. Augustine, divine revelation was physically crafted, a spirit incarnate, as written texts. Then, the reader, inspired by the Holy Spirit, becomes an author who

again provides access to divine revelation in an unbroken lineage into the present. This dynamic shows how one individual may be creative artist *and* creative audience.

What is the higher power mentioned by Heinze (1991)? She refers to this force alternately as divine, sacred, spirits, or souls of the deceased. Perhaps the concept remained somewhat flexible due to her theory encompassing the beliefs of many cultures. In addition, shamanism is marked by a lack of dogmatism, without codified religious beliefs, that may also cause the definition of higher powers to be in continual flux.

Augustine deliberately sought out Christian texts to assist with his transformation, consciously seeking divine revelation. How deliberate the contemporary art audience is, in using art to access higher powers, is unknown. Although traditional shamans are often approached by a client seeking assistance, we do not know to what extent art audiences deliberately engage with art so as to receive shamanic benefits. The audience might not be aware of the benefits - and might not need to be aware of the benefits or the artist's intention – to receive healing. Achterberg (2008) studied the power of prayer to positively influence physical health. She found that the person being prayed about did not have to know that prayer was occurring to receive the benefits of intentional prayer.

From the beginnings of medical history, humans have held a belief in a spiritual connection to others separated from them at a distance. These beliefs have been held as the basis for the efficacy of prayer, so-called energy healing, and the ability to heal others at a distance ("nonlocal healing") (Achterberg, Cooke, Richards, Standish, Kozak, and Lake, 2005, p. 965).

Achterberg, et al., found that the distant intentionality of 11 Hawaiian healers, to connect with a specific individual, was positively correlated with changes in the individual's brain function as measured during MRI scans. Is it possible that an artist's intention to connect with an audience is similarly correlated with a measureable physiological response in the audience?

Braud and Schlitz (1989) studied the ability of individuals to influence, from a distance, the physiological state of others through the use of transpersonal imagery. The research found that the effect of transpersonal imagery, from a distance, had a similar effect, with similar strength, to how a person's own thoughts and emotions affect the person's body. Individuals who most needed the benefits of transpersonal imagery were more susceptible to influence; yet, people who wanted to block the effect could do so. Subjects did not need to know of the intention to have a positive response.

Zahourek (1998) mused:

Intentionality, focused mental attention on another, shapes transpersonal healing. Beginning with a desire to help another person, the intentional caregiver becomes "centered," using relaxation, meditation, self-induced trance, or active imagery. In this mental stillness, the healer's level of awareness is transformed to one that is open, sensitive, and keenly focused on the patient. Often perceptions of time and space are altered. An intentional goal develops and becomes more focused as the healer assesses and begins to treat. Central to ancient Shamanic healing, intentionality is now a key factor in many contemporary approaches and modalities.

“What is the relation between transpersonal imagery and prayer?” asked Dossey (1993).

“Both prayer and imagery have in common the ability to bring about helpful changes in the bodies of others at a distance, without the subject's conscious awareness” (p. 188).

If the audience was aware of the artist's intention and deliberately sought the experience of shamanic art, would they cocreate a more powerful healing dynamic? If artist and audience recognized their interdependent spiritual ability, would this consciousness further enhance healing?

McNiff (u.d.) wrote, “Art is an articulator of the soul's uncensored purpose and deepest will”; while Heinze (1991) stated, “whenever an environment develops needs, we can expect the emergence of a new shaman and it is the individual shaman who translates the sacred into the

secular in a language s/he creates along the way” (p. 17). Art can function as the voice of the soul, bringing its message into a world where it can be heard and understood.

### **Conclusion**

The art audience experience includes processes that define shamanic community. From art, the audience can receive fulfillment of psychological, social, and spiritual needs. At present, this manifestation of shamanic community is tentative, sporadic, and diffused in Euro-American culture. This situation is due, in part, to a lack of knowledge about contemporary art practices as shamanism. The examples of how art can benefit individuals and society, underscores the need for research on the art audience experience.

I hereby propose the foundation of a subfield within creative studies that develops a psychology of the art audience. Our first task must be the collection, organization, and synthesis of extant research on art audience experience. These studies are scattered in many fields, including nursing, neurology, reception theory, reader-response criticism, film studies, museum studies, aesthetics, and much more. At present, there is no bibliography of these studies and, thus, no overview of what data exists. It is important to note that psychology and creative studies are falling behind other fields in the development of knowledge regarding the art audience experience. Nonetheless, these fields will benefit from psychological data and research methods.

As research on the art audience is continued, I anticipate a growing body of evidence that demonstrates numerous elements of shamanism in art audience experience – as well as identifying how art audience is not like shamanic community. Differences, between the two entities, do not necessarily disprove the shamanic functioning of the art audience. Instead, differences may indicate where artists and audiences can collaborate on developing skills, artistic enterprises, and belief systems – thus creating new traditions.

Perhaps, shamanism might be the “big umbrella” that contains, and integrates, many aspects of audience experience. The capacity of art to provide for psychological, social, physical, and spiritual needs warrants dissemination of research, regarding the art audience as shamanic society, into the general public.

Information regarding art audience could be integrated into art education courses, from elementary school through college and beyond. Additional arenas for offering education on this topic would be seminars at public libraries and via art institutions such as museums, opera companies, and folk art festivals.

The experience of art has the potential to form and strengthen communities as well, providing an antidote to social isolation and existential despair. Wikström, Theorell, and Sandström (1992) found the non-directed use of reproductions of works of art stimulated happiness, peacefulness, creativity, and social activities among institutionalized elderly women. In addition, there was an improvement in systolic blood pressure. In contrast, the control group continued conversations marked by downheartedness, despair, and complaining. Wikström, Theorell, and Sandström published another study in 1993, using reproductions of art and quantitative analysis, again with a population of elderly women. Once more, the general sense of well-being improved as well as a measureable decrease in systolic blood pressure. In addition, there was an improvement in medical health status, specifically with regards to fatigue, pain, use of laxatives, and dizziness. These studies show how art audience experience enhances health, in what might be a vestigial remnant of ancient shamanism.

At a minimum, the results of such studies can provide support for increased funding for art education programs despite the severe economic contraction suffered by many schools at present. Another potential program is the development of a curriculum to teach art audience

skills. Audience-artist cocreated art rituals could deliberately promote the restoration and evolution of a contemporary shamanic community.

Although purchasing works of art often seems unaffordable, the studies by Wikström et al (1992, 1993) shows that the experience of reproductions has a positive effect. Also, there are studies that demonstrate the positive effects of listening to recordings of favorite music. Bradt and Dileo (2009) found listening to recorded music reduced heart rate and blood pressure while improving mood in coronary heart disease patients suffering from anxiety. When listening to favorite music, surgical patients required less anesthesia (Ayoub, Rizk, Yaacoub, & Gaal, 2005), gifted students decreased anxiety related to pressure to excel (Cadwallader & Campbell, 2007), and there were positive effects on intelligence, mental health and immunity (Avanzani, Lopez, Koelsch, & Majno, 2005).

One art audience study at a time, we can begin to balance the scales presently tipping radically to one side, imbalanced by the plethora of studies on artists and other eminent creators. Perhaps a good place to start research on the art audience is with a study on highly skilled audience members with decades of experience and extensive education in the arts – i.e., great creators in the field of art.

From these long neglected experts, we have much to learn.

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